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Ad Hoc Public Works Planning Committee
Guide to Interim Policy Development

In the document, titled "Plan to Establish a Department of Public Works in the FY11 Operating Budget" dated November 16, 2009, steps were outlined to introduce cost saving measures into the budget along the lines of what might be expected in implementing a consolidated Department of Public Works. Step 4 of the plan asked the ad hoc committee to develop interim DPW consolidation policies. The interim policies, upon approval of the Board of Selectmen with recommendation from affected commissions and departments, would guide future consolidation efforts, focusing on resolution of real or perceived barriers to department consolidation.

This document is provided to the participants of the ad hoc DPW Planning Committee to assist them through the process of policy development.

1. SPEAK THE WESTFORD LANUAGE
Policy reflects goals and priorities. It drives our procedures and regulations. Without good policy, procedures add little or no value. The hierarchy is policy, procedures and rules and regulations. It is important to understand the difference between policy and procedure before beginning to write it.

DEFINITIONS

Policy - A guiding principle in an organization.

Procedure - A method used to achieve the intent of the policy.

Rules – Establish the limits. Rules clearly communicate standards to all personnel.

2. KNOW THE PROCESS
Policy development can be a challenge for some. It is easy to fall into a habit of writing procedures or action steps rather than good policy. The simplest advice is to write policy to achieve a desired outcome. The steps below describe one method for writing good policy.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM

Use clear, concise language to describe the problem to be solved or avoided.
Use as many resources as possible to identify the problem.
Use multiple viewpoints.

STATE WHY IT IS A PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED

Describe the root cause.
Briefly describe the consequences when policy is not followed.

SUMMARIZE THE CORRECTIVE ACTION TO BE TAKEN

Describe what is to happen in the future.

IDENTIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Say who is responsible for seeing to corrective action.

REVIEW THE WRITTEN POLICY

Have the policy statement reviewed by stakeholders.
Give a definitive closing date to the review period.
Circulate beyond the obvious stakeholders.
Check the policy statement for consistency with existing policy or law.

REVISE THE POLICY

Allow time for correction.
Gain approval.

COMMUNICATE THE POLICY

Distribute the policy.
Explain it.
Put the policy into practice.

3. APPLY THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO DPW CONSOLIDATION

The Board, Committee, Commission & Department Feedback Summary On Special Town Meeting (October 19, 2009) proposal to classify a Director of Public Works position for Westford document and Feedback Summary Table classified responses into categories and identifies several problems with a potential consolidation of services, functions, positions or departments. One identified problem is used as an example in applying the process described above.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM
From the report, "A request to see specific cost savings projections and how they would be achieved was a universal request from all Boards, Committees, Commissions and Departments," was an identified problem.

Lack of specific cost savings projections

STATE WHY IT IS A PROBLEM
From the report, **"**Specifics need to be known and presented, along with specific expected savings, in order for the proposal to be credible," suggests a root cause.

Proposal lacked credibility

SUMMARIZE THE CORRECTIVE ACTION
Example of the type of corrective action to be taken to resolve the identified problem.

Thorough cost/benefit analyses will be submitted to Town Meeting

IDENTIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Example of who might be responsible for overseeing the corrective action.

Town Manager with approval from the Board of Selectmen

POLICY STATEMENT
Pull it all together in a written policy statement.

To lend credibility toward the classification of a new position in the Westford Wage & Classification bands for the consolidation of departments, a thorough cost benefit analysis will be submitted to Town Meeting by the Town Manager with the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

4. WATCHOUTS FOR WEAK POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The following is a list of common errors to be avoided during policy development.
• Do not state a time certain for completion of the objective.
• Do not state a particular way to accomplish the objective.
• Focus on a single event.
• Do not confuse the past with the present.
• Focus "on the system" not "in the system."
• Focus on a point in time.
• Do not use one policy statement to resolve multiple problems.